"To promote Christian ideals for agriculture and rural life; to interpret the spiritual and religious values ich inhere in the processes of agriculture and the relationships of rural life; to magnify and dignify the al church; to provide a means of fellowship and cooperation among rural agencies: *Toward a Christian ral Civilization.*"

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The Second Missionary Adventure

By Warren Hugh Wilson*

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FOREWORD

This essay was not prepared for print but was delivered as the annual Missionary Address in the chapel of Oberlin College, in which the speaker received as a student his deepest devotional and scholastic impressions. This will account for its personal references. When its publication was desired by friends, these personal references were marked for omission; but it has been thought best to leave it as a personal confession of one who has "lifted the stone and cleft the wood," only to find the Master in every task. It is meant as a tribute to those devout adventurers who have spent themselves in the service of the people nearest at hand, especially to those who realize the presence of God in action; who are guided by "the sound of a going in the tops of the mulberry trees." --

Warren H. Wilson, September, 1915

Thirty years ago, at Mt. Hermon, Massachusetts, a body of college students on their knees volunteered for service as foreign missionaries. There are college men and women who remember signing the Volunteer Pledge in the following year and entering upon a great missionary adventure. Thousands engaged in it, as an outburst of youthful energy, breaking the bonds of custom and expectation. Some of them are serving to-day on foreign soil; and some serve at home; but all of them are the better for stretching wings of adventure early and looking into the naked sun of soaring purpose.

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*The death of Dr. Warren Hugh Wilson on March 2, 1937, meant the loss of one of our greatest statesmen and interpreters of the rural church. Dr. Wilson was for almost thirty years in charge of the Department of Church and Community Work of what is now the Board of National Missions of the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. His sociological survey of the Quaker Hill Community in southeastern New York State was the first of its kind ever made in the United States. "The Second Missionary Adventure" is a missionary address made by Dr. Wilson at the Oberlin College Commencement on June 13, 1915. It contains so much that is pertinent to our present day, when much new adventuring is called for on the part of rural workers, that the Christian Rural Fellowship is happy to be able to reprint it, though in slightly shortened form. Our appreciation is expressed to the children of Dr. Wilson and to the Fleming H. Revell Company, who copyrighted and printed the book, for kind permission to again make this notable address available.

The spirit of that adventure was cosmic. We faced the world, and our thoughts and prayers were in terms of Ego and the Universe. In the inspiring addresses which moved us the old classics of Greece and Rome played a greater part than they ever will play again, I suppose, in religious inspiration. Caesar's daring, Alexander's sigh for more worlds than the one, and Napoleon's laconic opinions of the relation he bore to all time were standards as influential in that rhetoric as the sublime patience of Morrison in his siege of the citadel of China, or the continental missionary adventures of Livingstone in Africa. The world was, in that great movement of young hearts, open to the influence of the individual.

And personality was the power by which God was to move the world. We heard much about the power God gives to one man, and there are members of those early bands who still live for the ideal of religious power. One soul was made equal to the value of the whole world. And it was argued that if one soul is worth so much how great must the call be, for one man to influence the four hundred millions of China. Numbers of the heathen figured in the impressions made by the advocates of the great missionary adventure, and leadership was the ideal to attain.

In my Junior year, while still filled with the spirit of this great adventure for the Lord, I was persuaded to enter Professor A. A. Wright's class, known, at least to my remembrance, as "Second Botany." I was by the professor assigned to the study of the algae in a certain pool of water, with the population of which he bade me become acquainted. Little did I think that this assignment would have for me revolutionary religious influence. But from that course and from another course in Zoology, which followed it in Senior year, have come certain formative intellectual influences which have given type and character to my religious experience. I have since met so many others upon whom the biological and social sciences have had profound religious influence that I am convinced my experience is typical.

The adventure which I met in the study of minute colonies and nations which lived in a pool south of Oberlin was continued, still as it were without awareness of its importance, in the study of Criminology in Columbia University, and later in the study of Statistics and then of Taxation. By this time I had come to know many other adventurers in a new field, their spirit the same devoted and gallant boldness which I had met in the Student Volunteers. They were settlement workers, Association secretaries, social investigators, ministers in downtown pulpits, and newspaper men. Among them were such personalities as James B. Reynolds, now patiently cementing the walls that are to filter the foulest of social evils; Jacob Riis, then a young Danish reporter on the New York Sun; Graham Taylor, whose place has been that of teacher; and Franklin H. Giddings, the son of Congregational and Abolitionist ancestors, who has for twenty years held the first chair of Sociology to be set up in any university in the world. Robert McBurney, the great Y.M.C.A. secretary, made me aware of a new spirit of adventure. Here was a man who had a great story to tell. It was not about the world and himself, but it was about the algae in a certain pool known as New York City. With all the life of that city he was acquainted, and in its story he forgot himself. A. F. Schauffler, also a gallant Christian fighter on the East Side of New York City, inspired me with the love of new paths of daring and conflict. These men gave those who knew them the desire to do, and to offer one's life in the doing, regardless of superficial tests of success. They were having their adventure, and the end might be what God should decide. The sweetness of life to them was in the bold attack upon the sealed gateways, the resolute invasion of fresh fields which had never been known by man.

Specialization in service may perhaps be called the spirit of this new religious experience. One student for the ministry was put by Professor Giddings to study a city block, much against his will; and later, again under protest, he was persuaded to go South and give his life to the scientific study of the Negro social problem. He is now the leading expert in Negro affairs in the Census Bureau and in

the National Bureau of Education at Washington. He has not had a cosmic experience as he expected, when he entered the ministry, to have; but he has greatly served in a special place. These men urge their propaganda not with arguments of quantities of men, but with a plea for qualities which are of concern to all.

Like others, I found this kind of work a hard yoke to put on. My master in this new adventure ordered me to make a study of the social population resident upon a rural hilltop in New York State, where I had begun my ministry. I begged him to give me something more important, but he declined, insisting, as Professor Wright had insisted, that I learn the living population of a certain limited habitat, that I learn it not only in quantity but in the qualities which organized and classified it, not only horizontally but vertically. The study of that pool of algae near Oberlin, and of that country community near New York opened a new world to me, and caused me to read what is written between the lines of the Bible. Religion became a social as well as a personal matter. Salvation became possible for families and nations; for the soil as well as for the soul. To my eyes appeared groups of men, coming to the church. I knew now why families sit together. I saw reasons why women are so many times more numerous in church than men are. I came to know the human and divine value of money and its place in the economy of God. The poor man, about whom great writers and advocates were at that time pleading, came to have the place which he held, I suppose, to Jesus, who said, "Blessed are ye poor for yours is the kingdom of God." I saw, what others of the time were seeing, in the new psychology, the critical place which the child and the adolescent occupy in our religious experience. I saw, too, that no man has solitary religious experience, but that it is a matter of the family, the community, the nation and the race. So that the sinner, as old Calvinists insisted, is not to be blamed by the saint for the sin of both of them; and for either of them salvation will be by the grace of God alone.

Then I came to read the life and letters of Charles Kingsley, the humble English parson who shook all the vicious economic system of England, with the shaking of his fist in a country pulpit. Of Herman Schultse, the German radical, prosecuted by the Hohenzollerns, and of Frederick William Raiffeisen, rewarded and honored by the same royal house, who devoted twenty and thirty years, respectively, to the perfecting of systems of credit, by which poor men may band themselves together and borrow money with which to buy the tools of industry and save themselves from want. Of Bishop Grundtvig, the Danish poet, pastor and educator who transformed the Danish peasant from renter to owner of the land of his birth.

A good instance of the new spirit, wrought out of the old material under pressure of opposition and necessity, was the experience of my beloved master in the older classic learning, William Goodell Frost. He had been called to the Presidency of Berea College, and had undertaken that work in the earlier missionary spirit, as a cosmic adventure. There the Negro was to be educated with the white. The idea from within was to impose itself upon the material without. Society was to be moulded by personality. But adverse legislation came upon Berea. The Negroes were segregated by a law passed with no friendly spirit, and President Frost had to begin, against his will, the more highly specialized service of the mountain people; only to find that the greatest distinction of his life, the great adventure, was to be found there. With the education of the mountaineer he has become identified. By it he has been known all over the land. He has spent himself in this service, and with diminishing strength but undying spirit he stands in a place of his own as the pioneer and the prophet of the Berea enterprise. Without his planning, and against his protest, but with open mind, he has passed from old to new, from the classical school of service under the world-idea to the specialized service of a certain community. The Master has assigned him to his pool to know the algae there and report upon them to the world. He has his adventure.

The new adventure in the Lord's service has not been without opposition. It has sealed its charter as a Christian enterprise by the stamp of religious conflict. Good people have differed about it. It is not a seeking for power, and it does not glorify personality. It does not talk about leadership, and it makes little mention of regeneration of the individual, at least it has little to say about anything miraculous or magical or incapable of measurement. While proceeding in sympathy with the usual processes of religion, especially the oldest processes, it makes less of conscious conversion than those do who are under the influence of the Wesleys. Moreover, the men and women in the new adventure speak a new language, with a new delight. The worn phrases please them not. Without any feeling of opposition, at first, to the usual religious work, they see things by a new light. Social processes rather than personal, exclusively, engage them.

Above all, there is a different mind among them. The older religious adventure has closed its mind. No new truths could equal the old. No new experience could rank with those once known. Convictions were not open to argument. Only facts could be ascertained, and these must array themselves according to the hypothesis on which life was mapped out. I once asked a classmate, home on his furlough from Siam, what was the motive that took him to the foreign field, and he replied that no sense of the need of the people there called him; for he volunteered for no particular country; but obedience to the command of Christ. Then I asked him what motive had through the fourteen years of his service as a missionary sustained him; whether he now felt drawn to the Siamese, charmed with their language, touched by their needs, melted with love for their social and personal attractions. He replied that none of these things held him to his work, but only the command of Christ. And he is a happy, successful and honored missionary.

I suppose that none of the men and women of the new adventure would so testify. The place of the mystical Christ is not the same with them. The mind is open to all the influence, the heart attentively awake to all the needs of the people about them. Indeed the new adventure is based upon investigation. Social surveys have taken their place, as thorough as Charles Booth's study of London, or as the Pittsburg Survey, in the beginning of the work of every minister or schoolteacher who enters upon his task in the spirit of the new adventure. The open mind takes nothing for granted and regards no conviction as a finality. All the more perilous and adventurous therefore is life, for every enterprise is a testing of new principles. Convictions may never be crystallized but they become strong as oak. That they are subject to change means the same as to say that they are alive and growing.

Contrast to the experience of the Siamese missionary that of Sam Higginbottom who went to India as a teacher of Economics in a missionary college near Allahabad. He saw that the converted Indian had to live on a few cents a day, and he remarked, as others had remarked, that there never could be an independent self-supporting church in India until the tillers of the soil knew how to make more money from agriculture. He started a propaganda for a better income for the native Indian farmer.

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It is argued that this is not and cannot be religious service. Men who try in Christ's name to raise the standard of living of the poor are required to stand and be sworn in in terms of the older dogmatism. For this reason many social workers have gone outside of religious service. Indeed the records are said to show that those employed in humanitarian, social and charitable service are, ninety-five per cent of them, children of the churches. But their present engagement outside of religious bounds is used as an argument against that type of work by the very warriors who prodded them at the spear's point out of the camp of the chosen people!

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The new adventure is a service based upon locality and intimate knowledge. It is not cosmic. It usually passes years in the care of a little pool as inconspicuous as the pond with its algae, before it discovers any world-significance. There is nothing of the spirit of "God--Myself--and--the--World," the phrase which a brilliant young pastor near Boston recently used to condense religious experience. Rather there is the spirit which delighted us in John Watson's "Drumtouchty" stories. Here was a pastor in a leading church of Liverpool in and out of whose harbor flows the trade of the world; and he wrote the story of his early pastorate in a poor Scotch town among a sparse mountain people who kept sheep and cattle. It proved to be his adventure. It was all he had to tell of his life that men cared to hear. Men laughed and wept over Jamie Soutar and Marget Howe; and they called the writer around the world, not to hear him tell about Liverpool but about Drumtouchty. They filled his hands with silver and gold. I suppose that his fortune and his fame, that flowed from the accidental telling of the story of that poor country ministry among farmers unable to support a church themselves, exceeded that of any man of his class and time.

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A man I know, in the mountains of Kentucky, was sent there more than ten years ago and has been well supported since, by an Eastern church. He began to preach to the sinners, and still does so, his record as an evangelist exceeding all others in the state. But he ministers also to the sick in a fully equipped hospital. He cares for orphans in a Community Home. He trains teachers for all the schools of that country in a college. And he has called the very corn and hogs to repentance. For, seeing that sterile and scrub seed corn was impoverishing the people, and that razorback swine were keeping them poor, he introduced better seed and a better breed of hogs. He insisted that illicit whiskey should no longer be made or sold in the community. He introduced modern sports, especially baseball. With these adventures and diversions and by means of the fascination of organized play, he won the young men from the desire for stimulants and from the habit of "pistol-toting," and he finally won them one by one to Christ. He has recently crowned his work for all the living things in Buckhorn, where he lives, with the symbolic ringing of the evening bell. At the sound of this bell at sunset every man, woman and child stops where he is, lays down what tool he is using and bows his head in prayer. Thus they have learned to apply to every day and to every thing and to every creature the gospel which they had all their lives heard on a few Sundays, in the form of words; but never had thought of as good news for the sick, for the children, for the hogs and the little cattle.

This is just the spirit of the second missionary adventure. Its ideal is not power but fitness. It has not taken personality as its standard of values but adaptation and social use. Its science is not philology, nor is its religion all expressed in language, even the sacred writ; but it rests upon that which is behind the Bible, the life of men with God in labor for daily bread, in sickness, in trouble, in poverty, in birth, love, sorrow and the imminent probability of death. Its sciences are the new forms of learning, about wealth and people, economics and sociology. It verifies its proposals with statistics, and explores its field with scientific research. Its results are like those that follow any devoted missionary effort, beyond calculation in the lifetime of the missionary. The rewards are to be had in the adventure itself, in the warm consciousness that God is in it, and in the holy sense that He has His greater plans the outlines of which we dimly see--and seeing them, rejoice!

Right here one may discover the principle of the whole new adventure. It is a fight for the people who are in jeopardy. It is a service based upon selection, but those are selected who are in danger of falling, whose position in the community is not settled, or is unsettled by attack or strain. These are the children, the sick, the poor, the foreigner and any other social groupings who are likely to be

lost. The new adventure is a search for the lost sheep--which was not lost but only in imminent danger. It is a determined effort to keep the lost coin, in which the whole value of the estate is appreciated. For Jesus in these three parables expresses the principle of marginal measures of values, which has been made by some economists the basis of all science of values.

Is not the worker for the welfare of children just beginning life in the great city as true a missionary of the Lord as the man, his classmate from the same college, who labors for the welfare of the marginal nation to whom civilization has just dawned? The Children's Court is a Mission Compound, in which the gospel of social life is taught to little people standing doubtfully upon the margin of life in the city.

This enables me to say that the Lord is sending men nowadays to preach a doctrine of the usual rather than the exceptional life with God. The first preaching of the gospel must always be an appeal to men who differ from their fellows; so that the first missionary adventure dealt in a religion of differences. It sought distinguished personalities. In our present social experience we find ourselves valuing the things in which men resemble one another. We see that the regular and most frequently repeated religious life is, by reason of that fact, of most concern to the Father of All. This is what one means when he speaks, with knowledge, of "social religion."

Furthermore, the second adventure is a struggle for better economic and social conditions for men. We are in a fight for the survival of our people and their standard of living. In the older adventure we contended for the salvation of the soul, and in this we battle for the salvation of the nation, or the community. We have found poverty in America, the land of boundless resources, where so many have gotten wealth. We were converted to this enterprise, some of us, by men like John R. Commons, whose stern face was early set against pietism, to look with cold eyes upon the facts of the life which poor men have to live. He came to his high privilege of public service through a time of trial in which he had to choose the loss of income and endure privation, in order that he might speak for those who have no income, and who know only privation.

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The new adventurers are determined that the American without land or tools, who has only his hands to serve society with, shall continue to have meat to eat and a woolen coat to wear, shall have an income for the support of a family, and shall have schools and playgrounds, libraries and hospitals adequate to the intellectual, moral and physical survival of himself and his children.

The new evangelists would fain believe that the family and the community, as well as the soul, have an immortal life. Indeed there is no reason in the nature of the family group why it should pass out of the world. We read in the Old Testament the laws and the prophetic revelations by which the immortality of the Hebrew family was to be established. But we see in America and Europe, especially in Protestant and in other highly personalized populations, the decay of family life. We discern somewhat clearly that in this peril to the immortality of the household there is a danger which threatens the immortality of the soul. Persons who so live as to terminate the existence of families are losing claim to eternal life for themselves. So that we are studying the nature of the family group, reverently looking into the oldest social bond in the history of mankind, the love of mother and child. We are even daring to study the problems of sex, and to speak freely about the facts which underlie the love of man and woman, the holiest of all things on earth, the oldest of all priesthoods.

This has not been done without peril. Prudery and Puritanism have cried

ut; and it is hard to work with a cool head when one is assailed by poor relations on one side and by the ghosts of his grandparents on both sides. Theologians ave protests against the frank analysis of sacred traditions, which come down to s from earlier days of simpler speech. But in vain. The purpose of all this invasion of sacred enclosures is the release of human and divine power. For we have ome to see that the community, the family and the state have promise of eternal ife. For them as well as for the soul there is a share of "the power of an endless ife." What we believe about the soul as an act of faith, that we know about the amily and the community by observation and experience, that it is immortal in its ature and inherits death only because of sin.

One of the joys of the new adventure in God's service is the enjoyment of umor unashamed. The older adventurer is stern and takes slowly to the habit of miling or the dangerous admissions of laughter. Humor is a solvent of all things. t declares that things are relative and knowledge is limited and opinions are othing to be afraid of. The man who has it does not take himself too seriously. or his work either. He enjoys life. He has something always about him of the pirit of Kingsley's Irishwoman in "Water Babies," who appeared in various guise, Mrs. Bedonebyasyoudid and Mrs. Doasyouwouldbedoneby, and finally as a beautiful being looking like all her former selves, yet glorified, who sat and smiled down into "the pool wherein she saw things making themselves!" Humor is a characteristic of religion at all great periods of its release from bondage and from petrification. Samson had it and David and the Master. Martin Luther had a plenty of it, and so had most of the great evangelists of the century just past. Humor is the expression of a faith too great for present statement. It is often the fluid form into which crystallized belief is dissolved. And it is a great comfort to those engaged in a perilous adventure.

For the latter missionary adventurers are not only open of mind as to matters of fact. They are not sure that they are in the right!! Matters of ethical conduct also are in a plastic state. I do not mean that problems of personal conduct, about which men have been agreed of old, like the Ten Commandments, are called into doubt. I mean that they do not engage in their adventure by reason of knowing it is a true way of service, but by reason of not knowing. They are investigating by means of action. They are trying things on, to see if they will fit. They are trying out new principles, and adjusting old ones to new materials. Each knows that if he fails some of his comrades will succeed in similar adventures of the same great enterprise. For they believe in the ancient name of the Almighty, "God-with-us." This uncertainty and its open field are a chief source of joy to the adventurers.

When the world shall have all been redeemed, not only evangelized through all its quantities of men but Christianized in all its qualities; when the gospel shall have been enacted into law and felt in spirit for our children and our little cattle, for the other animals we drive and milk and feed upon and for the birds of the air--unto all whom it was promised in the Old Testament; when the Kingdom of God shall have indeed come in the redemption of all the customs and the wealth--the beginning of which redemption our eyes have seen--then ours will be written down as a missionary millennium. The first century is done, the century of the closed and resolved mind. The second trod upon its heels, impatient to begin its work, in the use of sciences newly born, to lay the foundations of religious service in reverent study of the habitat and of the habits of men. But both of these, and all missionary centuries, will show the future historian that religion is not so much a matter of truth as of action. It is an adventure for God.

The saved soul wants a story of its own to tell. Redemption from our sins makes each of us long to be somebody. We look forward in the youth of our life to the home gatherings, the class reunions, of our generation, and we want to

bring to the assembly something we have done, some story we can tell about God's wondrous ways with men. Each of us wants to live a life. Not all may do so, for many must be harnessed to the routine and married to the humdrum; but they also want to sit on the bleachers and see something doing. The proof of faith is action, accomplishment, enterprise, adventure. It may not prove what the adventurer hoped, or verify his hypothesis, but to the really religious man the adventure for God itself, in which he or one near to him ventures out where there were no paths, is worth while; and without this bold adventure nothing else is worth anything.

That is my first conclusion, that the religion of Moses and of Christ and of Paul means action above all. And the second is this, that it is important that this adventure be within, not outside, the church. Especially important is it that the second adventure, marked by broader scientific knowledge, be within the church. For the churches are the best channels by which the knowledge that the universities have in store can come to the use of the people. There is in the possession to-day of the men of learning an excess of knowledge of the most vital worth; but common people do not get the use of it. The reason is found--the chief reason--in the fact that religion is universal and education is not. Ministers of religion speak to the universal heart, while schoolmasters and investigators speak to the far from universal head, of mankind. So long as ministers oppose or ignore the conclusions of science, the people generally will take no warning from them. The time has come when the races of men, united in universal communication, sharing common means of intelligence, and aware of the same needs round all the earth, should use the conclusions of science for the perfecting and dignifying of family and community life. They will do so only when religion and its ministers declare that science is God's truth, the record of God's ways; and that obedience to God is best rendered by living sanitary, economic, social and Godly, according to all that man has learned in all ages of the world and in every holy land; for Palestine was the first, but only the first, of Holy Lands.

Third, the later missionary adventure goes forward in the conviction that only a combination of religious and patriotic motive will right social wrongs; and only the religious motive, a love of God and obedience to Christ, will enable men to do social right. Professor Ross in his "Social Control" has pointed out how pervasive religion is; beyond the power exercised by law or tradition or any other goodly force it appeals to the secret and to the most personal motives of men. For this reason it is that young men are going into religious service with a conviction that they, without power, acting in a medium of ease, upon forces that reach farther than one lifetime, guarding their efforts only with the best scientific research, and trusting to the elemental powers of nature and of God, will share the redemption of Christ. They cannot see the end. They do not know that they are in the right. Their adventure may be one of the experiments that shall fail, but it will make other such failure by those who follow unnecessary. They are having a good time. They feel the comradeship of noble company. Reflected in those who appreciate their work they see themselves as campaigners in no little war; but instead as skirmishers in the outer advance of the whole human race; which goes forward slowly, every step of the race a birth; and every pace forward a death.

It is given to only a few to be the adventurers for God on the outer bounds of human order and progress and faith. Most of the men and women must carry the bundles and the babies, and lead the animals forward. But those who have as students the rare privilege of knowledge, and as Christians the divine call of a devout and loving heart, God calls to be volunteers, who shall go out on His creative experiments, in themselves uniting the gifts of the university with those of the church. Their service shall be for all mankind, no matter how small the wayside pool they look into, no matter how remote the community they know and love, the story will be worth telling at the reunion. And their reward shall be the joy of the adventure itself. For in that adventure is the best fellowship on earth, a few comrades in every land, never too many to love, and all of them wise, sane and loyal. Of these comrades the one on every occasion present is the Master, the Son of Man, and the Son of God.